LAS VEGAS SUN

THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2002

Out of this world

UFO conventioneers land in Laughlin

By Jeffrey Libby
LAS VEGAS SUN

LAUGHLIN — Are we alone, or just arrogant?

At the 11th annual International UFO Congress convention and film festival — where many participants say they have met aliens, studied purported military log books detailing the high-tech prowess of their bright craft, or been abducted for tests — loneliness and arrogance are kindred spirits.

The truth, as they say, is out there, and the 450 conventioneers at the River Palms Resort are on a lonely quest for hard facts. They're stopped, they say, only by an arrogant government that wants to cover up facts of aliens, the paranormal and things that would make "The X Files" look pale in comparison.

"People need to be reminded that the government can and does keep secrets, and very well," said Ryan S. Wood, president of www.majesticdocuments.com, a privately funded research organization based in Menlo Park, Calif., that specializes in leaked, classified govern-

See UFOS, 4B

Robert Miller of South Carolina and Christina Smyth of Holland walk past a large alien balloon outside the River Palms.

UFOS

from page 1B

ment documents. "They kept the Stealth fighter secret for many years."

The week-long conference, which ends Saturday, attracted a smaller crowd of about 450 this year but is still billed as the world's largest. It's a forum for people who say the truth has been scrubbed out by a government afraid of losing its power and sharing the wealth of alien technology.

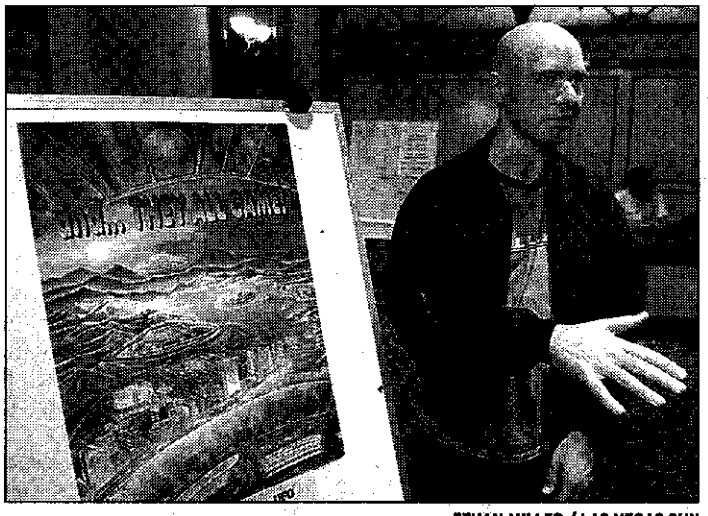
"The great crime of the cover-up is that the government has deprived the world of an opportunity to have a higher standard of living, advanced electronic technology and a chance to solve many of the medical problems of the world," Wood said.

Wood, like many others at the conference, said that Area 51, a top secret military research installation said to be located at Groom Lake on the Nevada Test Site, is the likely home of about 1,000 of the brightest military research scientists in the world. They are studying crashed alien craft, like that reportedly recovered from the famous incident in 1947 in Roswell, N.M., he said.

Fiber optics, a relatively new computer technology, may have been developed in part through "reverse engineering"— studying crash remains of alien craft, Wood said.

Much of the conference is based on proving the existence of alien craft and sightings.

Investigative reporter and author Nicholas Redfern, who has published three books through Simon & Schuster, said his research of British and American government documents available in national archives has shown that "the vast majority of sightings" can be explained. by satellites, aircraft or asteroids.



ETHAN MILLER / LAS VEGAS SUN

Nicholas Redfern of Lubbock, Texas, a UFO investigative reporter and author, talks at the 11th annual International UFO Congress at the River Palms Resort in Laughlin on Wednesday.

"But there is a small corpus of sightings from qualified professionals, like pilots and radar technicians, that is harder to dismiss," Redfern said.

Reports logged by British Royal Airmen describe aircraft traveling at speeds of 3,000 mph then screeching to a dead halt, "something that would tear a pilot's body apart," Redfern said.

He also points to British Air Ministry regulations from 1958 that instruct airmen not to speak to the press about UFO sightings, calling it a violation of the Official Secrets Act.

Other conventioneers were less engaged in recovering physical signs of alien life and instead searching more for the spiritual side.

Rob Baldwin, a 57-year-old retired real estate developer and exotic plant hobbyist, was one of them.

He has made it his job to talk about "being a galactic citizen" to just about everyone he meets, he said, whether it's a neighbor in his home of San Diego or an unsuspecting counter mate at a diner.

Much of being a galactic citizen means simple things, he said, like taking better care of the planet. After all, we lead a relatively primitive lifestyle, he said. It also means finding forums like the UFO conference, or Pahrump resident Art Bell's national radio show, to glean information not available in mainstream media.

Like many at the conference, Baldwin had an experience early on. He was 16. He was out on a Saturday night to drink some beer with three buddies, driving a 1955 Ford coupe through Michigan farm country. They hadn't been parked 15 minutes when an iridescent, egg-shaped craft appeared right in front of them.

"It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen," he said.

For Baldwin, that early experience, which he said and his friends didn't talk about for 25 years, was important in grounding his faith.

"It's like sitting down and having lunch with God," he said. "If you could do that, then you wouldn't have any doubts either."

Jeffrey Libby *is a reporter for the Sun. He can be reached at (702) 259-4063 or by e-mail at jlibby@lasvegassun.com*